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**Musica Figurata in Saxony and Silesia at the End of the 15<sup>th</sup> century**

Studies on the Repertoire of the Mensural Codices Berlin 40021, Leipzig 1494, and Warsaw 5892

Summary

The subject of the present study is the repertoire of three closely related manuscript books with polyphonic music in mensural notation from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

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1494 – the so-called „Apel Codex“), and Warsaw (Warsaw 5892, *olim* Breslau 2016). Even though they were all discovered either in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or in the opening ones of the 20<sup>th</sup>, thus far they have not been thoroughly analyzed in terms of their repertoire. Two of them (Berlin 40021 and Leipzig 1494) were compiled in Saxony, while the third one (Warsaw 5892) in Silesia, which means that all three come from the areas whose early musical culture, in spite of the research done by Riemann, Ehmann, Feldmann, Gerber, Just, Finscher, Staehelin, and others, is still hardly recognized. The aim of the book is, on the one hand, to investigate the reception of the „international“ (i.e. Franco-Netherlandish) repertoire in Saxony and Silesia at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and on the other, to determine the degree of assimilation of the „international“ style and „international“ techniques by the local musical tradition. Conclusions drawn from such investigations should allow the author to reinterpret the now prevailing view of the Central European culture of that epoch, and to prove that on the musical map of the Latin Europe Saxony and Silesia have their significant place.

**Part One** contains the codicological description of the Saxo-Silesian codices and is an attempt at defining their provenance (Chapters I-III) and functions (Chapter IV). The author presents here much hitherto unknown information concerning the manuscripts' origin and formulates new interpretive conclusions about their functions, as well as tries to locate them in a wider context of the „cathedral music“. A number of premises of a codicological and scriptural nature seem to cast doubt on a hitherto

widely accepted claim that the Saxo-Silesian codices were of a practical use dictated by the needs of the current musical *praxis*. As it has been demonstrated, the intention of the compilers was not to prepare the material for performances, but to retain the works unknown in the area or worth retaining for some other reasons. Hence, they were repository manuscripts – private anthologies kept to make more copies or used for didactic purposes: the teaching of composition on the basis of highly appreciated *exempla classica*. In consequence, the codices under consideration should not be associated with any specific musical institution – one should rather search for potential centers from which they could derive their rich repertoire. The Saxon origin of the Leipzig 1494 and Berlin 40021 codices has not been put into doubt; nevertheless, the problem of the institutions from which the compilers were likely to draw their repertoire has never been dealt with in detail. The author stresses the importance of two musical institutions of Saxony which are particularly significant in this context – the chapels of the elector Frederick III the Wise in Torgau and of Archbishop Ernst of Magdeburg. Besides, he does not exclude Leipzig itself, at that time a major academic and commercial center where musical repertoire could be acquired and exchanged. Since both codices consist of a number of independent fascicle-manuscripts, including some sent to the Saxon compilers in the form of letters, one may assume that lively contacts were maintained with quite distant centers, such as those in the southern parts of the German-speaking realm and in Italy.

In the case of the Warsaw 5892 codex, the – still hypothetical – Silesian provenance has been supported with new arguments which so far have not been considered. There are good reasons to believe that its compiler was active in the diocese of Wrocław: perhaps in Wrocław itself or in Nysa, the place of bishop's actual residence. At the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century *musica figurata* was performed in both cities. Despite the fact that the codex contains some fragments of Czech texts (in fact, one of them has the spelling typical of the texts from Silesia), the arguments favoring the Czech provenance of the manuscript postulated by Fritz Feldmann do not seem convincing: the worship of St. Venceslas was not limited to Bohemia – it was also widespread in Silesia, and

one of the texts included in the codex (*Ave spes et salus*) appears in a manuscript of the Silesian provenance (Neumarkt = Środa Śląska) as well. This provenance seems to have been additionally confirmed by the *Liber ordinalis* of 1563 made for the collegiate church of Nysa; it lists, among others, the antiphons dedicated to the patron saints of Wrocław: St. Venceslas (*Corde et lingua rogamus te*) and St. Clement (*Orante sancto Clemente*) included in the Warsaw 5892 codex.

The kind of repertoire characteristic of all the three manuscripts suggests that their origin should be related to some personage of an important ecclesiastical institution, such as a cathedral or collegiate church. A variety of works including, next to liturgical compositions, non-liturgical, secular, and even instrumental ones, reflects the activity of a succentor collecting material both for ecclesiastical use and civic ceremonies, and for his own entertainment. Moreover, the confrontation of the codices under discussion with other Central European manuscript sources indicates that from the codicological point of view they functioned as mediation between the Trent codices of 1465-1475 and the German codices from the second decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. codex Regensburg 120).

**Part Two** in the first place discusses the aspects of transmission of the repertoire in the context of European concordant sources (Chapter V). As far as we know, the concordances can be traced to 149 sources. They are widely dispersed geographically and chronologically (the dominant group made of the sources from 1480-1510), which indicates that in Europe that repertoire had been well known. The earliest concordances can be found in Central European sources – the Trent codices (Trent 89 and Trent 91), the Tirolian *Leopold Codex* (Munich 5134), the Silesian *Glogauer Liederbuch* (Berlin/Cracow 40098) and the Czech *Speciálník* (Hradec Králové 7) – and some Italian *chansonniers*. In general, concordances seem to indicate a wide exchange of repertoire with Bohemia, Bavaria and Austria, as well as with the most significant courts of the northern and central Italy – Florence, Ferrara, Mantua and Milan – and with the main centers of religious cult – the papal chapel and cathedrals in Milan and Verona.

Investigations permitted identification of so far unnoticed concordances, including such important pieces, as fragments of mass settings by Josquin Desprez (*Missa L'ami baudichon*) and Johannes Ghiselin (*Missa De les armes*). Along with the previously known concordances – sometimes the earliest or the only ones north of the Alps, as the works of Agricola, Ghiselin, Isaac, Josquin, Obrecht or Gaspar van Weerbeke – they significantly change the existing view on the reception of the Netherlandish polyphony in Central Europe.

The analysis of concordances also appeared to be an important measure in learning about the way in which polyphonic music was transmitted in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. As it has been proven in the study, the relationships between manuscripts change from one piece to another, and depend on the character of filiation of individual pieces. This is a consequence of an extremely complex and often very long compilation process of particular manuscripts, which is based on a very large number of sources, many of which do not exist anymore. As it was shown, the Saxo-Silesian copies of individual pieces are markedly different from the Italian ones, thus belonging to the Central European manuscript tradition.

To fully illustrate the paths along which the repertoire reached the territories of Saxony and Silesia, some aspects of artistic biography of composers represented in the codices were taken into account (Chapter VI). It follows from them that most of the composers were active for a longer or shorter period of time in northern and central Italy. Compilers held in high esteem especially the musicians representing the „Milanese“ style – Compère, Ghiselin, Gaspar van Weerbeke, and Josquin. It is natural that they were particularly interested in authors who one way or another were connected with the German-speaking areas, e.g. Isaac and Agricola, and perhaps even Obrecht.

**Part Three** focuses on the main problematic of the study – the analysis of the music repertoire preserved in the Saxo-Silesian codices. The focus of the four subsequent chapters of the book (Chapters VII-X) is a thorough analysis of mass cycles, motets, office music (*Magnificat* settings and hymns), as well as secular and textless compositions. The repertoire of masses (Chapter VII) is very diverse and it exemplifies all methods of integrating the *ordinarium* cycle characteristic of late 15<sup>th</sup> century, which

comprise *cantus firmus* masses, parody masses of different degrees of transformation of the polyphonic model, and various intermediate forms combining the *cantus firmus* technique and the parody technique. Another problem discussed at length is the transmission of the analyzed cycles, sometimes devoid of the Agnus Dei movement and showing characteristic deletions in the text of the Credo. As it was shown, which contradicts earlier interpretations, these deletions cannot be explained by any theological reasons; rather, they should be treated as a result of scriptorial initiatives taken at different points of transmission of the works.

This repertoire proves that three-voice masses were very popular in Central Europe and hence they should be treated equally with four-voice masses as representative of another independent tradition capable of producing interesting, and sometimes even intricate works. Some of them (*Officium Auleni*, *Missa Anonima I*, *Missa Ut mi fa sol*, Ghiselin's mass) are characterized by the so-called „chanson texture“ with low-contras scoring and non-quartal harmony, as well as by a common opening motto and other polyphonic links between particular sections, which implies that these works might have been song Masses, based on so far unidentified *chansons*. Another significant feature of both a three- and four-voice mass cycles (e.g. *Officium Auleni*, *Missa Re fa mi re fa* by Agricola) is a tendency to shorten the form by a rapid syllabic, homorhythmic text declamation in the Gloria and the Credo, which testifies to the fact that their authors must have been familiar with the Milan tradition of the *missae breves*. The Saxo-Silesian codices prove that for their compilers the Milan court along with the papal chapel (where e.g. *Missa Se mieulx ne vient* by Gaspar van Weerbeke, described in the Leipzig 1494 codex as „Officium papale“, was well known) were important musical institutions, from which they drew as much mass repertoire as they needed.

Much attention was also paid to the four-voice masses of local authors, i.e. *Missa Seid ich dich Herzie* by Adam von Fulda from the Leipzig 1494 codex, modeled after works by Dufay and Busnois, and to *Missa Anonyma II* of the Warsaw 5892 codex. Especially interesting is the latter composition: its first four movements are linked by the *cantus firmus* of unknown origin, whose

striking similarity to the *cantus firmus* of the *Missa L'ami Baudichon* by Josquin cannot be accidental. Since Josquin's mass was well known through Central Europe – which is manifested by the Poznań 7022 and Hradec Králové 7 codices as well as by so far unnoticed confractum of the Credo (*Jam miseras rex*) in the Leipzig 1494 codex – *Missa Anonyma II* can be considered as an attempt to emulate a composition of this Franco-Netherlandish master. *Agnus Dei*, on the other hand, supposedly added to the mass by the same compiler of the codex, appeared to be a previously unnoticed concordance of *Agnus Dei III* derived from the hexachordal *Missa De les armes* by Johannes Ghiselin, until then known only from the Petrucci edition of 1503. The new concordances confirm the fact that there had been an intensive import of mass repertoire from Italy.

A genuine compendium of contemporary formal and technical solutions can be found in the motet compositions included in the studied codices (Chapter VIII). This comprehensive anthology of works is reflective of the plethora of composers' solutions as regards *cantus firmus* treatment. One of the specific aspects under consideration was the function of motets based on the choral *cantus firmus*. Some evidence indicates that it was not determined by the underlying text. A clear dominance of the *cantus planus*, and by the same token, of the typically Germanic texture known as *contrapunctus fractus*, is a clear trace of the influence of an older Central European tradition, which was also observed by Henricus Isaac. Some of his works provided models for local composers (Adam von Fulda, Heinrich Finck), thus laying foundations for the German polyphonic tradition of high Renaissance. Besides, it is significant that fragments of some works of local provenance (e.g. *Benedicta semper sancta*, *Salve regina II*), circulated also in Italy, functioning independently in secular sphere, as in the case of extracted sections of some masses (e.g. *Missa Quant j'ay au cor* by Isaac).

Another focal point of the study concerns motets based on the non-choral *cantus firmus*. Both *O decus ecclesiae* of Isaac and *Regali quam decet* of Agricola or Isaac, as well as the two „heraldic motets“: the anonymous *Ut mi fa re ut* related to the coat of arms of the Wettin dynasty (in the Leipzig 1492 codex) and *Venus stella* by Bartholomäus Frank addressed to an unknown lady

(in the Warsaw 1592 codex), are based on arbitrarily constructed solmisation patterns. Using elementary didactic models (*exercitia vocum*) or referring to isorhythmic techniques, these motets prove that the late tradition of medieval constructivism was still alive. Two other bitextual motets based on a popular love chanson by Binchois, *Comme femme descomfortée*, fall into a different category. Although both these composition (*Angeli, Archangeli* by Isaac in the Leipzig 1494 codex and *Inviolata, integra est casta* by Ghiselin in the Berlin 40021 codex) are transmitted as contrafacta, they prove that the Saxon compilers were interested in works characterized by rich symbolism and clear intertextual allusions.

The most important in motet repertoire are pieces showing a tendency to eliminate differences between the „northern“ constructivism and the new, originating from Italy, concept of symultanic composing, widely applying homorhythmic texture. They best epitomized the tendencies, drawing from the spirit of humanism, to respect syntactic, prosodic and semantic values of the musical text. The new image of this kind of works was influenced by the fact that Franco-Netherlandish composers assimilated elements of Italian music, in particular the polyphonic lauda. Traces of inspiration by this genre can also be found in the repertoire associated with the court in Milan. A prime example of the phenomenon may be the presence of isolated fragments of the Milan cycles of *motetti misales*. These motets, composed by Compère, Gaspar van Weerbeke and Josquin, are the best examples of „the Milan motet style“ of the last decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and they provide evidence of close contacts between Saxony and Silesia and the Milan musical circles. As it has been documented in the book, the repertoire of the discussed works contains a few authentic laude, transmitted either anonymously (e.g. *Psallite deo nostro, Super ripam Jordanis, Beata es virgo puerpera* in the Warsaw 5892 codex, or *Ave Christo caro, Salve corpus Christi, Ave splendor patris* in the Berlin 400021 codex) or with doubtful attributions (Conrad Rupsh, Ranlequin de Mol). In numerous works of this kind the text-music relationships are disrupted to such a degree that it may be supposed that they are simply contrafacta created in the German-speaking realm.

The present study strongly emphasizes the fact that in the territory of Saxony and Silesia the works of Franco-Netherlandish composers were not only known, but also fully assimilated. This is manifested by their numerous contrafacta and reworkings, which then encouraged local composers to compose independently. Today, these compositions enable us to assess accurately the reception of the repertoire originated in northern Italy as well as the character and expansion of the contrafactum practice. The key example here is the famous motet *Ave Maria . . . virgo serena* by Josquin, transmitted with a new Latin sacred text in the Berlin 40021 codex, which shows how much attention Saxon musicians paid to the works of Netherlanders and how creative they were in adapting them to the local needs. Some of Fink's Motets (e.g. *Ave Jesu Christe* and *Miserator Dominis*, both in the Berlin 40021 codex) show clearly that the local musicians were particularly focused on the synthesis of Franco-Netherlandish contrapuntal craft with rhythmically vivacious, vertically oriented Italian style of the polyphonic lauda. This is confirmed by an anonymous motet *Vulnerasti cor meum* (in Berlin 40021 codex), whose effective textural and metric contrasts between duets and four-voice scoring emphasize the structure of the text, revealing a strong fascination with Josquin's music. This wide motet repertoire, combining the best achievements of the „international“ character with local attempts at their emulation, truly exemplifies the character and extent of symbiosis of the local and Netherlandish composing techniques.

A wide repertoire of office music – hymns and *Magnificat* settings, as well as single psalms and *Lamentationes* (Chapter IX) – provide clear evidence that Saxo-Silesian codices were all rooted in liturgy. A bulk of this group consists of anonymous works, probably done by the local composers. They represent functional mensural polyphony, typical of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which met the current liturgical needs of cathedrals, collegiate churches and minor church centers. The simplicity of the means through which they were realized suggests that these frequently modest works fulfilled the recommendations set by the papal bull *Docta sanctorum patrum* of 1324/1325 whose postulates echoed and re-echoed throughout the Central Europe. The application of the monorhythmic *cantus firmus* and *contrapunctus fractus* texture



guaranteed that these works would not lose the character of functional music: they did not mar the integrity of the modal characteristic nor destroy the declamation of the liturgical text.

The achievement of local composers is best represented by the *Magnificat* of Adam of Fulda, which is characterized not only by „German“ type of *cantus firmus*, but also by sequential patterning and parallel tenths between outer voices. This exemplifies a technique which was described by the composer in his treatise and which was employed in all musical genres that he adopted. Contrary to what earlier scholars claimed, this technique was used not only by the local musicians but also profusely by the Netherlandish and Italian composers (e.g. Busnois, Isaac, Agricola, Obrecht and Gaffurius). Stylistic features of a number of anonymous adaptations of *Magnificat* settings, transmitted in the Saxon-Silesian codices, imply that among the authors of these adaptations there might have been also Netherlanders active in Italy.

The transmissions of hymns constitute the largest group of the analyzed repertoire. Most of them fall into the group of anonymous *unica*, and chronologically they span over a quarter of a century (1470-1495). In terms of style, this repertoire is not highly diversified, but well-anchored in the musical practice of the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. In the simplest model, the versification of the text is closely respected, while the imitation technique is used sporadically. Only in few four-voice hymns, imitation appeared more frequently and the syntactic structure of the text was blurred (e.g. Finck's hymns). Worth mentioning are two *unica* by Agricola, one of which (*Ave maris stella*) refers to the Italian tradition, while the other (*A solis ortus cardine*) to the Central European tradition. Much attention was devoted to a group of bitextual hymns, with two overlapping liturgical melodies and corresponding texts. In the simple settings, fully submitted to the two liturgical *cantus firmi*, we can find different types of content relations between the texts, which specify the purpose of individual pieces or highlight their deeper liturgical meaning.

The last group of works analyzed in the book comprises the contrafacta of secular compositions and textless compositions (Chapter X). The repertoire consists mainly of chansons and the so-called „songs without words“. Many of the compositions are

the oldest copies (*Adieu fillette de regnon* and *La la hö hö* by Isaac) or the oldest ones north of the Alps (*La morra* and *Alla battaglia* by Isaac, *Dictes moy toutes* and *A la mignone* by Agricola, *Scon lief* by Barbireau, anonymous *Alla caccia su su*). Besides, some *unica* featuring stylistics characteristic of Netherlandish compositions were classified as hypothetical contrafacta (e.g. *Santissima virginum reginum* and *Ave praeclarum lumen* in the Warsaw 5892 codex or *Exaltata est* in the Berlin 40021 codex). Some contrafacta or textless compositions are classified as songs (e.g. previously unknown a contrafactum *Vrucht en moet* by Roelkin in the Leipzig 1494 codex) or sections extracted from longer works, now lost (e.g. *Ave regina aegrotantis mundi* or *Quattuor* in the Berlin 49921 codex), whereas others are labeled as didactic compositions or have their roots in the activity of town *Stadtpfeifer* (*Symphonia nobili* and *Virgo singularis* in the Leipzig 1494 codex). In general it can be said that a significant number of contrafacta – both the ones known earlier or those that were discovered or suspected in the course of the examination – sheds much light on the mechanisms of reception of the Netherlandish or Italianate secular music and on the private use of the Saxo-Silesian codices.

The study focuses also on the Central European form of transmitting the secular repertoire. Both the „songs without words“ and chansons were given new Latin sacred texts; therefore, even in the case of transmitting textless chansons one cannot say they were intended as instrumental. They were conceived vocally and generally so performed. Abandoning their original texts or reducing them only to incipits indicates that the fundamental postulate of the time, deriving from the spirit of Renaissance humanism, i.e. close relationship between music and text, was not of utmost importance for the compilers of the Saxo-Silesian codices, or at least was of a lesser importance. Frequently, contrafacta required substantial intervention of the authors into the original structure of the adopted compositions. Some of them (e.g. *La Martinella* by Martini, *Dictes moy toutes* by Agricola, the anonymous *Hylaris musa* from the Warsaw 5892 codex) feature rich coloration, known also from other Central European sources of vocal music; other contrafacta (*Ave quae sublimaris*) prove that even complicated voice lines may have been performed vocally.

In this chapter special emphasis was put on the use of sequential patterning. The stereotypical figures (the so-called *redictae*), by many scholars regarded as typical of genuine German music or of the „instrumental style“, are also very characteristic of many Netherlandish chansons and „songs without words“ (e.g. pieces by Isaac or Agricola). As it was shown, in the Renaissance theory of music, these patternings constituted an elementary pedagogical model in teaching hexachord and solmisation, and they were equally popular in secular and sacred music, in both cases serving the purpose of closely integrating contrapuntal texture. Hence, sequential patternings as such do not indicate the „instrumental style“, but are rather one of the elements of universal musical language. Therefore, on the one hand, they provide the evidence for the fact that composers were interested in creating „autonomous“ contrapuntal structure, independent of the word content, but on the other, testify to the stylistic homogeneity of sacred and secular polyphony in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Summing up, the analysis of the Saxo-Silesian codices sheds much light on the late 15<sup>th</sup> century means of obtaining repertoire created outside Saxony and Silesia, as well as on the interests and tastes of compilers and the range of their activity. Since there is no way to identify the compilers (except Nikolaus Apel, if we accept him as the compiler of the Leipzig 1494 codex), it is very difficult to explain the repertoire preferences by taking into consideration personal connections of the compilers with the circles in which the works were composed. Without any doubt, however, we can claim, that a decisive role in transferring the „international“ repertoire was played by the court chapel of Maximilian I in Innsbruck, with which Isaac, Renner and Hofheimer were associated, and whose connections with the court of the Saxon elector Frederic the Wise cannot be questioned. In spite of a broad representation of the works of Isaac, the importance of the court of Maximilian I should not be overestimated, as a number of such compositions had already been circulating in Italy in 1470-1480. In the light of what we know now about the contacts of Saxon and Silesian church officials with northern Italy and with Vatican, as well as about no less intensive trade contacts, we cannot exclude a direct transfer of works from the latter territories.

Hence, it is impossible to overestimate the importance of the Saxo-Silesian codices for the musical history of Central Europe. They throw new light on the mechanisms of reception of a broad European repertoire in Saxony and Silesia, and document close cultural ties of these regions with other areas of the fifteenth-century Europe. Thus, they contribute much to the recognition of the unique local color of mensural polyphony practiced in German-speaking realm and – by the same token – of the whole musical culture of this area prior to Reformation.